

From Readiness to Resilience: ASEAN Healthcare takes centre stage at Medical Fair Asia 2026

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Technology alone may not be enough to close the readiness gap



Southeast Asia's healthcare sector is entering its next phase with confidence, but not without pressure. While 94% of healthcare and MedTech leaders across six ASEAN markets believe their organisations are prepared for the next three to five years, almost all—98%—also expect at least one development to significantly test that readiness.

The findings, unveiled at the inaugural **ASEAN Care Readiness Index 2026**, set the tone for the opening of **Medical Fair Asia, Medical Manufacturing Asia and RehaCare Asia 2026**, which are taking place from September 9–11 at Marina Bay Sands, Singapore.

Commissioned by Messe Düsseldorf Asia, the Index draws on the views of 300 senior healthcare and MedTech decision-makers across Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam and the Philippines. It examines the region's preparedness across four interconnected areas: workforce; infrastructure and technology; future care and rehabilitation; and MedTech innovation and supply chains.

At the heart of the findings is a clear message: confidence in current capabilities does not necessarily mean readiness for what comes next.

Digital transformation and artificial intelligence emerged as the most frequently identified future pressure, cited by 54% of respondents. At the same time, 44% identified digital health and AI as their organisation's single biggest capability gap—more than twice the proportion citing MedTech innovation, at 17%.

The investment outlook points in the same direction. Six in 10 respondents said digital health, AI, data and interoperability should be prioritised for investment, making it the leading investment priority across every market surveyed.

Yet technology alone may not be enough to close the readiness gap. Technology implementation capability was identified as the most frequently cited barrier to future readiness, at 54%, followed by workforce capacity and skills at 46%.

The pressures facing healthcare systems, however, are far from uniform across ASEAN.

In Singapore, ageing populations and workforce shortages jointly emerged as the leading future pressures, each cited by 48% of respondents. In Indonesia, digital transformation and AI were identified by 66% of respondents, while the same pressure led in Vietnam at 62% and Malaysia at 52%.

In Thailand, growing demand for rehabilitation and long-term care was the leading pressure, cited by 54% of respondents. Meanwhile, in the Philippines, rising healthcare demand topped the list at 54%, with technology implementation capability and funding and investment also emerging as significant barriers, cited by 60% and 58%, respectively.

The differences highlight the increasingly complex nature of healthcare readiness across Southeast Asia. The region is not facing a single challenge, but a convergence of demographic change, workforce constraints, technology adoption, evolving models of care and the need for stronger healthcare infrastructure.

“Confidence is a strong starting point, but readiness cannot stand still,” said **Lars Wismer, Managing Director, Messe Düsseldorf Asia**.

He noted that healthcare systems across Southeast Asia are navigating technology adoption, workforce constraints, ageing populations and changing models of care simultaneously, creating an opportunity to strengthen the connections between these areas.

The timing of the Index is particularly significant as Medical Fair Asia expands its focus across the wider healthcare ecosystem.

Alongside the established **Medical Fair Asia** and **Medical Manufacturing Asia**, 2026 marks the Singapore debut of **RehaCare Asia**, extending the conversation beyond acute healthcare into rehabilitation, assistive technologies, community care, healthy ageing and independent living.

The addition reflects a broader shift in healthcare demand across the region. As populations age and chronic and long-term care needs increase, healthcare systems are being challenged to think beyond hospitals and acute treatment towards more connected models of care that extend into homes, communities and rehabilitation settings.

Together, the three exhibitions bring healthcare providers, MedTech and manufacturing leaders, rehabilitation and community care professionals, policymakers and innovators under one roof, spanning the healthcare value chain from medical manufacturing and digital innovation to healthcare delivery and independent living.

The ASEAN Care Readiness Index Panel Session, held as part of the opening programme, explored the findings mean for the region's healthcare and MedTech ecosystem, particularly as organisations seek to translate confidence into the capabilities required for the next stage of care.

The session was followed by the Official Opening Ceremony of Medical Fair Asia, RehaCare Asia and Medical Manufacturing Asia 2026, with Low Yen Ling, Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Trade and Industry and Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth, attending as Guest of Honour.

The events are supported by a network of healthcare, knowledge and industry partners, including SingHealth as Healthcare Innovation Partner, Frost & Sullivan as Knowledge Partner and temi as Smart Solution Partner, alongside healthcare and rehabilitation organisations from across Southeast Asia.

As the region's healthcare systems look towards the next three to five years, the Index offers a timely snapshot of where confidence is strongest—and where the next investments, skills and innovations will be needed. The message emerging from Singapore is therefore not simply that ASEAN is ready. It is that readiness will increasingly depend on how effectively technology, people, infrastructure and new models of care can evolve together.